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DEPARTMENT FOR DRL (GMAGGIO)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2018

TAGS: PHUM KDEM KJUS SOCI PGOV HO

SUBJECT: ZELAYA EXECUTIVE DECREE FOR 1980S HUMAN RIGHTS
REPARATIONS

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (U) President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya announced the formation of a National Program of Reparations on December 10, the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. The program will compensate victims and the family members of victims who were the victims of human rights violations in the period of 1980 to 1993. The new request is the result of an Executive Decree by Zelaya which was published in the Legal Gazette on December 5. Zelaya tasked the Committee of Family Members, of the Detained or Disappeared (known in Spanish as COFADEH) with carrying out the new program.

¶2. Despite the program's claimed intention of supporting all victims, only two names were included in the official decree published by the government, according to December 19 press reports. One is Milton Jimenez, Zelaya's legal advisor; Jimenez is said to have been tortured by Honduran Security Forces in the 1980s after being caught with seven other students planting bombs throughout the capital. The other, Berta Oliva, is head of COFADEH and an ally of Zelaya's; her husband allegedly died after being tortured by the military in 1980s.

¶3. (C) Comment: Honduras previously has provided reparations to victims of violations from this period, due to cases brought before the Interamerican Court of Human Rights. This is the first time, however, that they have created a process to provide reparations to victims from this period. Zelaya's desire to be seen as a populist may be the reason behind the creation of the commission. However, the fact that only two names were included in the publication of the decree suggests that this may be a pay-off to two close allies. Oliva has received compensation in the past. Jimenez has not. When the Zelaya administration first took office, Jimenez was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs; he publicly announced at that time that he would not pursue his case while Minister. Since he has left the MFA and is now in a much more low-profile position as legal counsel, he has again been pushing his case. End Comment.

LLORENS